XXI

Funerary honors for warriors who die in battle

766 When a Mundurucu happens to die in the course of one of their frequent wars, his comrades cut off his head and mummify it in the accustomed manner.

Upon their return to the village, they put it in a special place along with the weapons, horn and ornaments which belonged to the dead warrior.

This relic becomes the object of public veneration.

765 If a Mundurucu from a neighboring tribe happens to come by, he goes to see it and pays it the proper respects, weeping and lamenting its fate. In the native village, public honors are paid to the late warrior; the time is settled in advance and invitations are made to neighboring villages.

When the time comes the people get together; the head is laid in a sort of basket or hamper, which is placed across the laps of the widow, mother and sisters of the dead man.

The other women sit around them in a circle. Several torches of resinous wood blaze near the funerary basket.

The warriors, bedecked with ornaments and armed with bows and arrows, dance around the group, blowing their horns and playing other musical instruments.

Other groups of men do likewise inside the ekçam while some dance and sing around the house where the head receiving these funerary honors is located. All the while they pronounce in loud voices the following lament:

"Thou hast died, my kinsman, we shall avenge thee; this is the [131] purpose for which we are on this earth, each to avenge the other who dies in battle. Our foes are no braver and no more manly than we."

In Mundurucu it runs as follows:

[537] "Ftean ari ubaripeinhaçan eted ei ue-gne ari utiede aipanme idie õpe te atedeiame rupanhõ be tean anhem parui ate bé. Uterupanhon ibeixi ame utie de utedie ute beixi."

These funerary celebrations last for longer than one day.

until she reaches puberty, the prospective husband assumes the responsibility of providing food for her and her parents. A younger man may obtain a wife by giving several years' bride service in the household of the girl's parents. 584

Death and burial.—An "executioner"[1] was pointed out to Martius, whose duty it was to despatch the fatally ill and the senile. Attribution of this custom to the *Mundurucú* is said to be widespread among neighboring tribes. 888 734

When a death occurs, the maternal[2] relatives of the deceased cut their hair, blacken their faces, and conduct a prolonged wailing for the dead. The corpse, wrapped in a hammock, is placed upright with flexed knees in a cylindrical grave under the floor of the dwelling. Grave goods consist of ornaments and other small objects. Skeletons of men of high status are exhumed and burned after the flesh has decayed; the ashes are buried in jars. 764

When a warrior is killed on a distant battlefield, his head is taken back to the village and put on display with his ornaments, trumpet, and weapons. After a feast in honor of the deceased, the head is suspended from the neck of his mother, widow, or sister, and his fellow warriors pledge to avenge his death. During this ceremony the shaman is isolated in a special hut where he blows the sacred trumpet (kaduké). The ceremony is repeated at yearly intervals, terminating with the fourth performance, when the head is finally buried in the house of the deceased. 766 ●

RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES

At the beginning of winter, the *Mundurucú* perform a ceremony which on alternate years invokes success in hunting and in fishing. The shaman, isolated in a special hut, propitiates the guardian spirits of game animals and fish. A ventriloquistic dialogue in which the voices of the animals are heard proceeding from the hut informs the people of the shaman's success in obtaining the favor of the spirits. Offerings are made to the skulls of animals and fish. The ceremony is directed by a feast leader who is both a prominent warrior and a good singer. Tocantins (1877) reports a similar annual ceremony to propitiate the spirits of maize and manioc. 796 956

Farabee (1917 a) describes a feast held at the first full moon in May to celebrate the first hunt following the birth of the April litters of peccaries. After a feast in which young peccaries are eaten, there is a dance in which the performers imitate a herd of peccaries. Children run among the dancers like young peccaries while the older people imitate the sound of peccaries feeding; a dancer representing an old boar protecting the herd wrestles with another dancer who plays the part of a jaguar. The boar succeeds in holding off the jaguar while the herd of peccaries escapes. 796 535 224

1 [Martius [source #3] says this was done by the children -- Analyst]
2 [Martius says female rather than maternal - Analyst]

11: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1958
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dancers clothed in cloaks of buriti leaf, who danced from house to house, playing in each. Another connected trait reflected intermoiety ritual antagonism. When hunters of the White moiety killed a red deer, they mocked the Red moiety by piercing the animal's lip and inserting a woman's lip plug. The ears were also pierced and plugs inserted, and the deer was carried triumphantly to the men's house where the hunters danced before cooking the meat.

Tattooing was the only life cycle observance practiced in recent years by the Mundurucú. Although now rapidly disappearing, tattooing was started at the age of about six or seven and terminated some ten years later. Complete tattooing signalized full manhood for the boys and womanhood for the females and constituted initiation as an adult member of the society. If the chronology reported by my informant is correct, the *Dupsrip* may well have functioned partly to incorporate the young boys into the male world before they were subjected to the long and painful process of tattooing. Their new status as novitiate males would thus be signified by the custom of pecking the women at the end of the ceremony, the first time in which they played a symbolically male role in interaction with the women as a group.

Warfare Ceremonies

Summer, the dry season, was traditionally the time for warfare among the Mundurucú. War parties usually stayed in the field throughout the dry season and returned before the winter rains made rivers impassable and life uncomfortable. Occasionally an expedition pursued its activities throughout the rainy season and the following dry season, but it always returned before the rains forced it to spend a second winter abroad.

Those Mundurucú who stayed at home generally passed at least part of the dry season away from their villages, moving to the river banks where they fished and hunted. The first rains of September and October brought them back to their villages where they reunited with the returning warriors to take up the threads of mundane village life and, also, to stage the most important rituals of the Mundurucú ceremonial cycle.

The villages of successful head-hunters were the locales of a series of ceremonies that involved ritual observances during three successive rainy seasons after the return of the war party.* No ceremonies were held before going on the warpath, and the war ceremonies of the Mundurucú were part of the religious beliefs and activities surrounding the supernatural potency of the trophy head and of its owner rather than rituals to assure a successful raid.

The return of a war party was an occasion of joy and festivity in the Mundurucú villages, but the holiday atmosphere was often dampened by the saddening news of the death of a kinsman during a foray or while on the march. The bodies of the fallen warriors could not conveniently be brought back to their communities, but it was nevertheless considered necessary that certain clans of the comple-

*Some informants claimed that the ceremonial cycle was carried out during one rainy season, but the majority opinion and most reliable view were as above.

11: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1958
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727 616 766 mentary moiety have the privilege (or pleasure, as some informants phrased it) of burying the dead of the other moiety, if only symbolically. For this purpose, the humerus of the dead Mundurucú was cut off and the flesh stripped from the bone after the arm was boiled and allowed to dry in the sun. Indicative of the symbolic importance attached to the moieties' prerogative of burying each other's dead was the practice of amputating the humerus of a wounded but still living warrior who was unable to continue the return journey. Furthermore, when the body was lost or a vengeance party was in hot pursuit and such Draconian measures were impossible, a symbolic arm bone was made out of a short piece of arrow cane and duly mourned, treasured, and buried.

727 766 The grisly operation of taking the humerus of the fallen warrior was performed by a member of the latter's *iboiwutitii*, or those clans of the opposite moiety that held the special burial right over the deceased's clan. This man brought the bone back to his village and guarded it carefully, sleeping with it in his arms "as if it were a baby." After an unspecified period, the man's mourners and many members of his *iboiwutitii* gathered to bury the bone in the floor of its custodian's house.

765 [302] Both male and female kinsmen of the slain warrior were expected to weep loudly upon hearing news of his death. The patterned wailing of the men was of short duration, but that of the women was expected to last for several months. Also, women, as in the event of the death of any relative, had their hair cropped close to the scalp and were prohibited from wearing any body ornamentation. The latter restriction applied also to men, but their hair was not cut. The cutting of the woman's hair was always done by a male member of her *iboiwutitii*.

727 796 The actual cycle of trophy-head ceremonies began shortly after the return of the war party with an observance known as *Iwyxaborutaptaba*, or Decorating the Ears. This ceremony and those celebrated in the two succeeding rainy seasons were held under the leadership of the taker (or takers) of the trophy head, who was thereafter honored by the title of *Dajeboši*, or Mother of the Peccary. Food was amassed by the host village under his direction, and invitations were issued to other villages. The purpose of this phase of the trophy-head ceremony was to decorate the head. Implicitly, its function was to inaugurate the head and its owner into the status that both would occupy until the conclusion of the cycle.

The preparation of the trophy head began during the return march from the enemy village. First the brains were extracted with the wide bamboo point of a war arrow, which was inserted into the head through the foramen magnum. The teeth were then knocked out and carefully stored away, and the head was lightly boiled and dried near the fire. This process made the skin dry and parchment-like and effectively preserved it. Finally a woven cord was inserted in the mouth and led out through the nostril by a hole pierced in the hard palate, leaving the tasseled ends of the cord dangling from the mouth and nostril. At a later time, the eye sockets were sealed with beeswax and two paca teeth affixed across either eye.

The Mundurucú considered the crowning glory of a trophy head to be the